

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

v.

JONA RECHNITZ,

Defendant.

16-CR-389 (AKH)

**APPENDIX TO SENTENCING MEMORANDUM
OF JONA RECHNITZ**

COOLEY LLP

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Exhibit 1

ALISA ADLER

[REDACTED]
NEW YORK, NY [REDACTED]

Honorable Alvin K. Hellerstein
United States District Court
Southern District of New York
500 Pearl Street,
New York, NY 10007

Dear Honorable Judge Hellerstein,

I am writing to you on behalf of Jonah Rechnitz who is sitting before you for his sentencing. I am able to write this letter from my own recent firsthand experience with the criminal justice system.

I have come to know Jonah over the last few years, mostly from amazing work he has done in the community. However, this is a letter that is coming to you from a very personal nature. From the time my case started in 2015, there were often so many things going on at once it was hard to see the forest from the trees. I know for me I was very lost and petrified.

However, when you have to look at what has transpired, you need to be able to see past yourself and see what we are supposed to learn and change.

At the time, Jonah made himself tremendously accessible to hear me out and help me see things that I could not see. Jonah was immensely influential in making the decisions I needed to in order to move myself forward and accept responsibility.

I do not come from a lot of money and have worked very hard for many years to try to make a living. The 2009 crisis threw my family business into a tailspin. Soon after that time, the world was spiraling out of control and before I knew it my world was turned upside down.

It is Jonah who without a missing a beat, made time to talk to me, help me, guide me as well as helped me pay a portion of the legal bill so I could keep going. In addition, Jonah was responsible for guiding others in the community to help make full restitution in my case. From what I understand it is unheard of. Without Jonah's help I would not have made it.

It is very easy to get stuck in your own world and issues and ignore someone else's need for help. This is the exact opposite of what Jonah did.

He got right in there with me to help me see what I needed to see and become accountable for my actions.

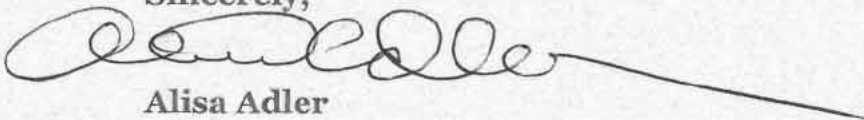
I would like to share that even before I knew Jonah, I was at many social gatherings where Jonah's case and his decision were open game and discussion amongst large groups of people. In one specific instance, I was at a table with 23 people and one person openly spewed all the particulars about the case, along with his very hurtful opinion which was all wrong. I personally not even knowing who Jonah was, walked out of the room because it was so painful to hear someone else speak recklessly without abandon about someone they were supposedly friendly with. I actually went over to his wife and told her that she needs to muzzle her husband. Most of the things being said that day were not even accurate which I later learned when I became more familiar with Jonah and his case. Your honor, there has been an enormous amount of push back from everyone in his Upper West Side community and Los Angeles community. His life has been turned inside out. I cannot imagine where he would go to feel safe. It has been horrible for him and his wife and hardest on the kids. Unfortunately, I know all too well, what it is like to have friends abandon you, and turn on you when you need them most. Yet, in the midst of it all, Jonah made time to help me.

Your honor, it is not easy for me at all to be writing to you because the pain is still so great, yet I could not imagine not helping someone who made a huge difference in my life and helped me get to the other side of responsibility and accountability.

I know Jonah is so meaningfully sorry for what happened here and his participation for what went wrong. He has acknowledged and spoken to me about his accountability time and time again. He has learned many lessons that he needed to learn. The community, his family, his wife and I need him here. We need Jonah's help to learn how to make better decisions. He is a tremendous resource of goodness and can take this information and utilize it well to help others prevent their mistakes before they even happen. I beg of you your honor, from a person who is aware of the horrible idea of being removed from your family, Jonah's children are very young and need their father with them.

Please I ask you to see how much Jonah has been willing to contribute and have mercy on him and judge him very favorably. Please do not to incarcerate him for any period of time, so he can be with his family, and continue to contribute to all that desperately need him.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alisa Adler', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Alisa Adler

Exhibit 2

David A. Alvarez

New York, New York

09/23/2019

Honorable Alvin K. Hellerstein
United States District Court
Southern District of New York
500 Pearl Street
New York, NY 10007

Dear Judge Hellerstein:

I, David Alvarez, met Mr. Jona Rechnitz in 2006 at the Apthorp where I am still employed. He has always been a humble and caring person who always asked for my family, how I'm doing and even knew when I was going through something because he would always ask. Jona has been a great individual with me and everyone he has come in contact with, it never mattered who you are Jona was the same with everyone - kind and helpful. I can say that when I found myself having issues with the IRS I approached Jona for advice. I showed him a letter that I got from the IRS and he then contacted his personal real estate attorney to help me find out what to do. When he got back to me, he explained that I owed the money and needed to repay it. Jona knew that I couldn't afford the payment and without me expecting it he gave me an envelope with the exact amount I owed so that I could pay it immediately. When I was ready to begin paying him back, Jona refused to accept the payment. This truly showed me what a generous, kind hearted human being he is. Needless to say, I didn't approach him with my problems for him to do anything for me, but he surprised me with his actions. I refused to keep the money and I had to insist in order for him to accept the repayment. This is only one of many acts of kindness and generosity that have led me to love him as a brother because he showed that he is selfless and truly offers his friendship without expecting anything in return.

Another big thing for me was when my mother passed away on October 2nd, 2016. Of all the people that have known me for many more years than Jona, it's incredible to believe that he is one of a handful of people that actually attended my mother's funeral in spite of this going against his personal religious beliefs. He

even offered to pay the funeral, again I refused the offer for monetary help, but these are the details that show who a person really is. Jona proved to be a true friend in moments where I needed one the most.

As if all the things that I've shared aren't enough, Jona even stepped in to assist me through a difficult time in which the landlord of my mother's apartment attempted to evict me by refusing to recognize my checks. It was clear that they were attempting to remove me from the apartment after my mother's passing, even though having been born there, I lived there for my entire life. Again, Jona came to my aid. He secured legal advice through his real estate attorneys to help me fight this injustice. At the end of the day, I can thank him yet again for having taken his time and resources to help me, a simple doorman at the Aphorp. Who would have thought that a man in his position would even think of helping another person in my position. He has a good heart and he doesn't go around boasting, but all I can say is if he's done all of these humanitarian acts of kindness for me, I could only imagine how much more he has helped the community in general.

In closing, this is what I know about Mr. Jona Rechnitz. Your Honor, thank you for your time and consideration. If you have any questions please feel free to reach out to me, David A. Alvarez at 347- [REDACTED]

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David A. Alvarez". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "David" being the most prominent.

David A. Alvarez

Exhibit 3

Rabbi Steven Burg

[REDACTED]

Bergenfield, NJ [REDACTED]

September 20, 2019

Honorable Alvin K. Hellerstein

United States District Court

Southern District of New York

500 Pearl Street

New York, NY 10007

Dear Judge Hellerstein

I have known Jona Rechnitz for the past seven years. We first met when I started working for the Simon Wiesenthal Center in New York City. I was introduced to him by people within the organization and we became fast friends.

What drew me to Jona was his unusually large heart. Whenever a situation came up regarding someone that was in need, he was the first to help. I recall vividly how one of his Rabbis from his school had fallen on hard times and was in need of a job. Jona arranged for the Rabbi to work as a security guard at one of his properties.

Jona's office became the stop for anyone that was in distress and required charity. It was as if he did not know how to say no when someone was in need. Even though Jona was a young man, I quickly became dependent on his advice and wisdom in my own work for the Simon Wiesenthal Center.

I was also close to Jona when some of the current issues came to light. I remember a conversation with Jona when I asked him what he had learned. He talked about how remorseful

he was and that he wanted to make it right. This was a private conversation and I felt that he was absolutely sincere in his remorse.

Unfortunately, the media has sought to portray him in a very negative light. Anyone who truly knows Jona understands that what they read in the newspaper is a gross distortion of who he really is.

Jona has faced tremendous communal pressure regarding his decision to testify. I was in a restaurant with him about a year ago and when I went to leave, I saw a prominent leader of the Jewish community. As I stopped to say hello, he said to me "I hope you know everything you just said was taped". I was horrified by the comment. This was a prime example of the communal ostracization Jona has been enduring as a result of his situation. Life has not been easy for Jona these past few years.

I ask you to please take the pain he has suffered these past few years and all the acts of kindness he has done and continues to do, into consideration in deciding what sentence you deem appropriate.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'S. Burg', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Rabbi Steven Burg

Exhibit 4

Date: 9/25/2019

From: Alejandro Cadena

NY, NY,

Attention: Honorable Alvin K. Hellerstein
United States District Court
Southern District of New York
500 Pearl Street
New York, NY, 10007

Dear Judge Hellerstein,

My name is Alejandro Cadena. I was born in Ecuador and raised between Ecuador, Panama and Israel and three and a half years ago moved to NYC with my wife. My wife and I were totally secular living in Israel and for the past 5 years we have become more observant (choser betchuva) and now we both live observant lives. We first met Jona at a friend's Shabbat dinner in the Upper West side. He was extremely welcoming and friendly to us since day one. After that we used to see him during Shabbat meals at our friend's house and got to know him and his family a little bit better. They were always kind and sympathetic with everyone.

My parents in law and my wife's family live in Los Angeles. In January of this year we got a horrible call from my mother in law saying that my father in law had suffered a massive heart attack and that he was in a comma at the UCLA hospital. Since that day it was Saturday (Shabbat) we only heard the unfortunate news 5 hours later after sundown and took the first plane to LA. My sister in law was already on the plane from Israel, and my brother in law in the plane from DC. My wife being the eldest of all three she is only 29 years old, her sister 27 and her brother 25. The whole family is secular but us two. When we arrived to the hospital we spoke to the doctors and the first response from the radiologist was that my father in law Boris was not in a good situation and that he is basically brain dead which makes him dead according to medical terms. The first thing I did was to call our friends in NYC and our rabbi to consult this since they wanted to disconnect Boris from the machine. Our friends told us that Jona had moved to LA and suggested to call him. I immediately called Jona and in less than one hour that evening Jona came with Rabbi Gramma to see us and the family and to discuss what is and what is not allowed according to alacha. This was a very difficult situation since the whole family is secular but I knew how important this is to me and to my wife who is observant. My brother in law Guy he is a medical student at Georgetown University and is completely secular (anti religion to be precise). I vividly remember telling Jona how desperate I was with the situation and he just assured me that nobody would disconnect Boris. Jona spent the entire night with us until 3 in the morning, ordering food for everyone in the room, speaking to doctors, speaking to the rabbi and making calls to his friends at UCLA hospital to make sure they won't disconnect Boris. The next morning Jona was there again with us, with a smile, with food, and giving us all hope that someone is taking care of this nightmare. He was back and forth speaking with all the doctors and arguing with them why they cannot disconnect Boris no matter what. After five days of Boris being in a comma things got very ugly with the doctors and also with my brother in law. The doctors declared Boris dead and said that no matter if his heart is stil

beating according to the medical world he can no longer remain plugged in the machine and that we had 12 hours to sign a paper so that they can disconnect him otherwise they would still have to proceed with this. Also the doctors kept claiming that it is "inhumane" to keep Boris connected since his brain was dead. My brother in law started siding with the doctors due to his lack of understanding of Alacha and what is right in this type of situations. He did not want to talk to anyone about it. My wife and I were in shocked so once again called Jona to come, Jona was there every day many times two and three times each day spending 6-7 hours of his day with us and the doctors. I never met a person with such a big heart and chesed and willingness to do something for others. Jona's wife was due any day during that time and not even that hindered Jona from being with us countless hours. I told Jona the situation with my brother in law and the whole family since everyone seemed to be getting angry at my wife and I for being so strict with the Alacha part of things. Jona immediately started speaking and literally bonding with my brother in law. Jona took us outside of the hospital to drink Turkish coffee in a place nearby and we were all able to see the cool side of Jona so my brother in law immediately felt connected to him as well. Jona explained to him and the family the importance of doing things the right way and how Judaism actually protects the body and sanctity of a person above everything else. Somehow Jona was able to turn my brother in law to side with us and fight the next battle with the doctors. The next morning was the deadline to sign the papers to disconnect my father in law. Jona kept making calls and got one of the lawyers to write a letter to the radiologist saying that they must give us a few more hours so that they can move Boris to a different hospital since his heart was still beating. This was an exhausting and draining process for all of us but felt so protected and loved by our angel then Jona. The deadline was prolonged until the next morning. Jona started making tons of calls to see ways to move Boris to a different hospital. My rabbi in NYC said that no matter what we cannot disconnect Boris from the machine if his heart is still beating so we were in so much stress. That night once again Jona was there for many hours bringing us dinner to all the family members and reassuring us that he is there for us. We kept praying and asking for a miracle. That night we were praying and doing the Amidah in front of Boris and suddenly his heart rate started decreasing. The nurses came and the second we ended the prayer his heart stopped. One of the nurses had tears in her eyes and said that she has never seen such a unity in the whole family. This was around 2 am. I called Jona immediately and he came in less than 30 minutes. Now we faced a different giant problem we needed to make sure that Boris is buried as soon as possible according to alacha, but Boris's father is 91 years old and lives in MigdalHaemek in Israel so we called him to tell him the news and he said that he must be present at the funeral. The issue was that he could not fly alone and the only person who could fly with him was Reuven Boris's best friend from the army years which had become like a son to Boris's father. The issue with Reuven was that his passport was expired and he had no tourist visa so once again Jona made calls and together with my wife were able to expedite his visa and passport in less than 24 hours to come to us. Jona called his travel agent and booked them two tickets and he took care of everything. He was literally our angel throughout the whole process in the hospital, during the funeral, during the Shiva Jona came couple of times to visit us and a few days later his wife gave birth. Since then we have been very close with Jona and he is always checking on us and how we are doing. Despite of having six children at home he is a true hero who not only helped us in the most difficult critical situation in our lives but also was able to change my brothers in law's perspective on Judaism forever. My brother is law still calls himself secular but has been saying Kaddish for his dad since Boris passed away. Also the way that my brother in law Guy looks and thinks of religious people changed drastically since the moment he met Jona. He had in his mind that religious people are utterly judgmental and that they only take care of their community

members. After meeting Jona he not only realized that this was not true but also realized that he could be close and become friends with religious people. Nowadays I am glad to see that my brother in law interacts with many religious people when he goes to Shul to say kaddish without any preconceive thoughts as he did before. Going to Shul with them is a pleasure nowadays and not like before. Another moving example of the exemplar of a person Jona is when Boris's father Michael (Born in Moldova, went through Russian Army and moved to Israel with his wife and two kids) as a proper strict army person started asking me who bought my ticket I must know and he kept insisting to meet the person who bought his ticket. Jona on the other hand did not want anyone to know who bought the ticket, Jona's altruism was once again shown here. Michael as an army guy brought up in communist Russia had a really bad view of religious people since they do not do the army so he always used to criticize the religious community saying that they only care about themselves. This all changed when I introduced Jona to Michael and told him that Jona is the person he had bought his ticket in such an expedite way. He immediately saw the black kippah on Jona's head but could not resist by thanking him for everything he was doing for him and the family. I played a bit of the translator between Jona and Michael since Michael does not speak English but it was so moving to see the shock in his eyes and after everything speaking to him and seeing that he now acknowledges that there are good religious people also. This was huge to see. I was in Israel in June and went to visit Michael and he always repeats the story that a good religious man bought his ticket to be on time for his son's funeral. Once again we thank Hashem for putting us Jona in our lives and we will forever be thankful for his huge heart and love for humanity and the Jewish people. His actions and deeds are not only helping religious communities but most importantly are bridging the gap between religious and secular communities since every secular person who gets to meet Jona connects with him and that is such a Kiddush Hashem for all Klal-Israel.

I hope you find in your heart the strength to make a fair decision and to understand that Jona was, is and will be doing a terrific great job for others in this world.

Sincerely,
Alejandro Cadena
+1-917-██████████

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'A. C. B.' with a stylized flourish underneath.

Exhibit 5



SAMUEL A. FRYER YAVNEH HEBREW ACADEMY ♦ ישיבת יבנה

5353 West Third Street ♦ Los Angeles, CA 90020 ♦ 323-931-5808 ♦ 323-931-5818 fax
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Rabbi Shlomo Einhorn
RAV AND DEAN

Eileen Wasserman
GENERAL STUDIES PRINCIPAL

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I have known Jona Rechnitz his whole life. Ever since we were children Jona was known to have a good heart and would always think about acting on behalf of others. We went to the same day school, we went to the same high school, and we went to the same university. At each of those institutions he always displayed the utmost eagerness to get involved in helping the larger group or helping those in need. I remember at Yeshiva University when he went to bring chocolates to the individuals working hard at the campus dry cleaners. I recall Jona taking an Israeli immigrant under his wing and helping his fledgling shawarma business get off the ground. For all of our interactions – the experience has been the same – “how can I better the lives of others?”

It is now many years later since the first memory I have of Jona. I currently am the Dean of the school that we both went to. Jona has moved back to Los Angeles and sends his children to this school. The impeccable nature of his and his wife's children display a goodness that is indicative of the person he really is. His active involvement in being an incredible father is so special and so unique. Together, with his incredible wife Rachel, they have raised six fantastic children.

As for a price to pay – I think he's paid an incredible price. He was taunted in synagogue and mocked in the press. He was accosted at public events. Jona and his family have been through hell and back. I hope that my words can mitigate a decision on his behalf.

Jona is a good person who has done a tremendous amount of kindness in the world. A lot of people's lives has been made better because of him. I am Rabbi of his family's synagogue. I encounter people all the time who are in need. Jona would give the shirt off of his back and beyond for anybody. Our city is frequently visited by those who can't afford rent or basic necessities. Jona is always my first call. And it is always followed by an immediate affirmative response to help.

Please allow these anecdotes to serve as the truth of who Jona really is.

Sincerely,

Rabbi Shlomo Einhorn

Rav and Dean of Yeshivat Yavneh



Yeshivat Yavneh is the
proud beneficiary of
grants from:

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Exhibit 6

Joseph S. Englanoff, MD

Los Angeles, CA

October 11, 2019

Your Honor Judge Hellerstein,

My name is Joe Englanoff. I'll ask in advance for forgiveness if this letter may seem informal or not in line with protocol for how letters of support are to be written. I've never written one before. Despite this being my first time ever writing such a letter, I do want you to know that I gave very serious consideration to the context of this letter and that I greatly value my reputation.

I met Jona Rechnitz for the first time that about two and half years ago. I was introduced to Jona as a potential tenant for rental. Prior to my meeting him I had heard through the grapevine about his issues, his trouble with the law and really expected the worse. I was proven wrong. We live in a small community. With in days of meeting with Jona, I could not believe it--I received several calls from prominent individuals in the community asking, no almost demanding, that I shun him and not allow Jona "into OUR community.....don't you dare rent to him...you realize he cooperated..." Your Honor, here was a guy, from what I could piece together, who was trying his best to own up to his past and right a wrong AND THIS "PIOUS" COMMUNITY is making every effort to ostracize him for that! I did not want to be a part of that--I signed him up.

Jona and his family for the past 2.5 years has lived about 250 feet away from me and my family. I interact with him almost daily. I've had countless long discussions with him, watched him with his wife and children, seen him interact with his parents, prayed with him in the same synagogue, attended many shiva calls for mutual friends with him, seen him hand hold with some friends of his in dire need of support and counseling. Again, I can not speak to any actions Jona had prior to 2.5 years ago but the Jona of today, by his very own admission is a "changed man." Jona has confided in me his deep remorse for his past actions, never once trying to make cover or excuses for his past--he owns it. The Jona of today has focused on his family, being a great father--I watched the genuine joy in his eyes as his oldest son got Bar Mitzvah'd in shul. I have watched Jona almost trip over himself to run to the aid of one of our neighbors with a highly autistic child--offering his personal assistance to that family with any task they may need from him. I saw Jona take under his

wing a high school classmate of his that was going thru financial ruin and personal divorce--sitting with him night after night until 2am to offer his friend endless comfort and support--reaching into his own experiences to convey a message of hope. I have watched Jona tear up when a close friend and father died of a brain tumor, leaving a wife and kids behind--without fanfare and in the quietest of ways Jona went out of his way to help and comfort the family.

None of these actions were done for purpose of communal or public acknowledgment--had I not seen for myself, there is no way for me (or anyone else) to have known. So why does Jona act in this manner? I've asked him this point blank and his response is stated as a matter of fact--"I've changed....I know what's important in life and I've changed." Your Honor, I believe him..... To add to that, it has not been easy for him. Shamefully, as I alluded earlier, we live in a community that many (but not all) look down on individuals who cooperate. In many ways, he's actually already been punished. He's not welcome in many parts of our community--subject to outbursts, name calling and worse--why? Because he chose to own up to his past. I would not dream to try and advise about the punishment you should impose on Jona. I'll simply state the obvious--that your sentencing will be sending a message, not only to Jona but to the local community who has already convicted and sentenced him.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Englanoff', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Joseph Englanoff, MD

Assistant Clinical Professor of Medicine and Emergency Medicine
Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center

Monterey Park Fire Department
Medical Director

Exhibit 7

Joshua Goldman

Los Angeles CA

323-

10-2-2019

Honorable Alvin K. Hellerstein
United States District Court
Southern District Of New York
500 Pearl Street
New York, NY 10007

Dear Judge Hellerstein:

My Name is Joshua Goldman I live in Los Angeles and I run a Transportation Company in Los Angeles I met Jona and his family by giving them rides on their Visits to Los Angeles when they lived in New York City and over many years our Friendship has grown closer and closer I want to tell you your honor about what a kind, caring, and truly compassionate person Jona is myself and my wife have three children thank g-d and the youngest of the three was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder at the young age of 3 years old as soon as Jona found out that my family was going through the constant struggles of raising a special child he was there supporting me in every possible way both financially and emotionally his caring comes from a very honest and sincere heart and soul that he has.

he is a very sensitive and caring person his kindness and caring knows no limits.

Other people offered us help but nobody offered such caring and compassionate help like Jona did.

when my wife was diagnosed with a Tumor in her abdomen two and a half years ago (February 2017) and underwent a major abdominal Surgery Jona was there again at my side offering me anything and everything in financial and emotional support. my wife has undergone three surgeries total since that first surgery and Jona has been there each and every time going above and beyond the call of duty he is truly a sincere and caring person that does tremendous kindness and compassion with joy and gladness and makes the person receiving the kindness feel so good and comfortable which is very noble especially for people that are undergoing and living through the hardship.

Jona is one of a kind as far as helping and caring for his fellow human being he is an extraordinary Father to his six lovely children and Husband to his amazing wife who cherish him and love him and need him in their lives so much I have watched in awe on countless of occasions how much unlimited selfless love, energy and dedication he gives to his wife and children he is a very present and active in every aspect of their lives educationally, socially, recreationally, emotionally and spiritually.

Jona has also gone through much suffering at the hands of certain members of the Jewish Community in Los Angeles who have ridiculed him and vindictively punished him unnecessarily and added insult and injury to him over and above the shame he has endured.

I want to share with you your honor the fact that Jona has changed dramatically over the past couple of years and lives with tremendous shame and regret and remorse because of what he has done and he honestly has changed himself as a person and is very remorseful.

I ask from the bottom of my heart to please show leniency to Jona at the sentencing his young children and his wife need him and want him in their life so very much as well as all the people that he helps with such extraordinary kindness, compassion, dedication and selflessness.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Joshua Goldman", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Respectfully,
Joshua Goldman

Exhibit 8

Aron (Ari) Gross
[REDACTED]
Brooklyn NY [REDACTED]
(212) [REDACTED]

October 13, 2019,

The Honorable Alvin K. Hellerstein
United States District Judge,
United States District Court,
Southern District of New York
500 Pearl Street
New York, New York 10007

Re: United States v. Jona Rechnitz,
16 Cr. 389 (RJS)

Dear Judge Hellerstein:

I believe that a man's action should be judged by intentions. If his intentions are foul, then he is foul altogether. Being an honorable district judge of the United States, no one can understand this better than you, or anyone in that position of authority and respect.

I am writing this compassionate letter for my dear friend, Mr. Jona Rechnitz, who will be sentenced at the next hearing. I only intend to shed some light on his decent albeit naïve character for your consideration. I have known Mr. Jona personally and professionally for a long time now. Here's how I got to know him:

Since I was employed by *Eichlers Judaica*, in the Boro Park sector of Brooklyn, and Mr. Jona was the landlord and manager of the property, once a month Mr. Jona came to the store to collect the rent. While he was there, he

Aron (Ari) Gross

██████████
Brooklyn NY ██████████

(212) ██████████

used to shop by us, he was extremely nice and generous, he always had a smile and a nice word to say, to make us feel good, he always tip us, I personally liked to assist him with his shopping, and as my boss always told me that Mr. Jona is unique, he never pressured for the rent being paid on time, (the 1st of each month), he always had a heart and understanding our struggle in business. I was happy that Mr. Jona was becoming my good friend, as he was so friendly to each and every human being, without any discrimination,

As soon as the community got aware that Mr. Jona and myself are friends, (which I was proud and not hiding), the harassment and pressure and intimidation campaign of the so called powerful community, begun to use me and my position at Eichler's to fabricate and make up stuff against Mr. Jona. I was offered unlimited amount of money to come forward with false stories against him.

Here is an example of how I was intimidated:

Eichler's Judaica was a tenant of Mr. Jona at the time, and they were paying 30k a month for over 20 years, (was never increased due to the friendship of Mr. Solomon the owner of property with Mr. Blue the owner of Eichlers Judiaca). The day when Mr. Jona raised the rent and signed a new lease of 45k monthly, the owner still continued to pay 30k per month since they couldn't afford the 15k raise. I then got a phone call from Mr. Moshe Oretz, one of Morty Huberfield's best friends, trying to convince me, and intimidate me, that the 45k monthly lease was a phony lease, and it was made just to show the bank and for investors, but the real deal was only 30k, so Mr. Jona committed fraud.

My reply to them was, that I am aware of the fact that we are paying 30k a month, and I am aware of the legit increase, but the real lease is 45k and the reason we only pay 30k is because the owner is home very sick and

Aron (Ari) Gross

██████████
Brooklyn NY ██████████
(212) ██████████

unable to come to work, therefore business is not doing well, so we cannot afford the raise. And I can assure you that there's no fake lease or any hidden deal. They were trying so hard to create a narrative of a criminal act, of this lease situation, against Mr. Jona, so they can discredit him and his witness position. They even went that far and report that to the FBI. I then was interviewed by the FBI agent *Mr. Brad*, and it was clearly established there story is not credible.

I have seen Mr. Jona over the years being taken advantage of by some corrupt and bad people, pretending to be his friend. Mr. Jona has a very soft heart, of that I have no doubt. Amazingly, until this day he wishes the best for Mr. Jermy Reichberg. Mr. Jona has a very soft heart, of that I have no doubt.

Mr. Jona has helped me, and is helping me out a lot in my difficult times. Mr. Jona has an understanding what to be a divorced man in this community, he has been there for me in all my difficult times with my kids, mainly by his open invitation to me, to spend every single Jewish holidays with him and his family, just so I do not feel lonely. He even helped me out financially on certain occasions, when unfortunately no one looked at me twice within my community.

I had no other friends where I lived. While this soft and kind-hearted nature makes him a very good friend, it also makes him vulnerable. In his pursuit to help people, I have witnessed, on many occasions, that Mr. Jona anonymously arranged support for people with life struggle and in financial trouble. The person in need used to get strong support, without knowing the identity of this angelic donator. Or when he realized that someone struggles in business, he would get his friends and family to buy or give their business to that person, without the seller knowing that Mr. Jona referred them,

Aron (Ari) Gross

██████████
Brooklyn NY ██████████

(212) ██████████

He hates taking credit for what he's doing. The only times he would be upset at me, is when I'm thanking him for what he has done to me. If I don't want him to hang up the phone on me, then I just don't say the word "thank you Jona"

Mr. Jona has encountered many bad people who took advantage of him, and his strong talented position, and his soft heart. Please note: the same evil people, was harassing me with great hostility, when I came to court at trial to give support, and be on the side of Mr. Jona. It was the word out in the community that no one is allowed to go to court to support Mr. Jona. It went so far that when I called up *Mr. Moishe Fried*, who had throughout the years benefit a lot from Mr. Jona, and asked him to come show support for Mr. Jona, he answered me that he's too scared from the community, and his kids won't be able to get married with community members, and when I told Mr. Jona that Mr. Fried is refusing to come, he said to me "I understand him, he's right."

And when the community got the word that I, *Ari Gross*, is the one and only guy in court to support Mr. Jona, I was harassed and bullied by the entire community, even while in court I was threatened by many including Mr. *Shlomo Reichberg* in front of the FBI agent, he then got a warning from the agent, to never do this again.

One of my best friends for 20 years, Mr. Chesky Schonberger, stopped talking to me, and ignores my calls until this day, for the only crime I committed, that I came to court to show support for Mr. Jona, and so are many of my friends, but Jona keeps on telling me, "don't worry about me, don't lose friends because of me."

Aron (Ari) Gross

██████ ██████████
Brooklyn NY ██████████
(212) ██████████

Mr. Jona is a family man who loves his wife and kids very much. And so does his wife and kids love him. Likewise, he is all that his family has got. With him going true hard punishment, his family would be destroyed.

The prime reason why he was cooperating with the authorities was that he had deep regrets about what he did and that he was really willing to change. Mr. Jona has then revamped his entire lifestyle and cut all the bad people in his life.

Dear Judge, I am fully aware that your job is not easy. It is, however, a very honorable position that is only given to people of the highest order. I cannot dare to tell you how to do your job, but I can request you to consider all facets of his character and intentions before you sentence him.

Please let us know if there is any other information that Your Honors require.

Respectfully submitted

X 

Aron Gross

cc: Alan Levine, Esq.
Defense counsel

Exhibit 9

Moise E. Hendeles
ATTORNEY AT LAW
4601 Wilshire Boulevard
Suite 205
Los Angeles, California 90010
Telephone (323) 933-5763
Fax (323) 933-5273

October 3, 2019

Honorable Alvin K. Hellerstein
United States District Court
Southern District of New York
500 Pearl Street
New York, NY 10007

Re: Jona Rechnitz

Dear Honorable Judge Hellerstein:

I graduated from Brooklyn Law School in 1974 and have been admitted to the State Bar of California since 1976. I have been the principal managing partner, of FLM Enterprises, a family owned Real Estate development and management firm, for the past 45 years. As one of the longest-standing members of the Los Angeles Jewish Community, my family and I are involved in philanthropy and fundraising for many charitable organizations. One of the most prominent Hebrew day schools in Los Angeles, with a student population of 500 students, carries our family name.

As a long-standing member of the Jewish Community I knew Jona's grandparents and grew up with Jona's father. I attended Jona's Bris as well as his wedding. I have four sons, ages 29 to 39. One of my sons is Jona's age, and has been a close friend of Jona for his entire life. I can honestly say I have known Jona his entire life, and I know him well. Jona is an extremely kind and caring individual.

My youngest son was single and living in New York at the same time as Jona and his wife, Rachel, lived in New York. Knowing my son was single and living alone, Jona and his wife would often invite him over for Sabbath meals and to celebrate other holidays together with their family. Jona and his wife, Rachel, looked after my son, as an older brother and sister would, and really cared for him. Every time I see Jona and Rachel, I express my gratitude to them for watching over my son. Jona always responds to my compliments saying it was "nothing."

Helping others is truly "nothing" to Jona. Helping others comes naturally to him, and is part of his nature. Jona also helped one of my other sons who started a business manufacturing and distributing men's socks. Jona helped him without any compensation. He just tried to help my son to be successful in a very difficult business.

Jona's nature is to help others when he can. He does it from the goodness of his heart and without expecting or getting anything in return. If you ask Jona for a favor, he does not hesitate if he can. His first reaction is to say yes. In this instance, Jona's mistake was his natural reaction of saying yes without really thinking about what he was doing and the consequences.

Jona expressed to me many times his regret in what he did. He is remorseful and suffered greatly as a result of his actions. Jona's parents are long-established prominent members of the Los Angeles Jewish Community. Jona, his siblings and parents are a very close-knit family. Jona's parents are proud of the reputation their family built over several generations in Los Angeles, earned by their charitable endeavors in both the United States and in Israel. They had an impeccable reputation. The embarrassment that Jona exposed his wife and family to was extremely painful to Jona. Anyone who knows Jona could see the pain that Jona experienced, and multiplied a thousand times, for what he knew his family was experiencing as a result of his actions.

I am a member of the same synagogue as Jona's parents. Two years ago, on Yom Kippur, our holiest day of the year, Jona joined his parents and siblings to pray in our synagogue, a synagogue where Jona's parents and grandparents were instrumental in building. A member of our synagogue reported to the New York Post Jona's participation in our services. The New York Post wrote a derogatory article naming our synagogue. The article caused much embarrassment to our synagogue's reputation and to its members. The member called the New York Post because he was upset that Jona was willing to testify against a fellow Jew. The New York Post and the internet caused the story to be repeated on a weekly and sometimes daily basis. The repeated newspaper articles of Jona testifying as a government witness, caused Jona and his family much embarrassment and aggravation. This was a direct result of Jona's testifying as a government witness.

I respectfully ask your consideration in granting Jona an opportunity to return to our community without the necessity of incarceration. He is already living in a community that, unfortunately, is not forgiving, especially from those who ostracize him for testifying as a government witness, and much more so against a "fellow Jew." Only by continuing to do good for others and living an honest life can he make amends to himself, his family and others he affected. Jona is a genuinely good person with a remarkably kind heart, who is doing everything in his power to rectify and make amends for his actions.

If called upon, without hesitation, I would appear in court on his behalf.

Thank you.

Respectfully yours I



Moise E. Hendeles
Attorney at Law

Exhibit 10

David Kahn
[REDACTED]

Teaneck, N.J. [REDACTED]
October 18, 2019

Honorable Alvin K. Hellerstein
United States District Court
Southern District of New York
500 Pearl Street
New York, NY 10007

Dear Judge Hellerstein;

My name is David Kahn and I am Jona's father in law. I have known Jona for almost fifteen years. Our personalities and lifestyles are quite different. I, as a CPA, from German and American parents, have lived my life, "under the radar", being relatively low key in my lifestyle. Jona, in the first ten years, was larger than life with the proclivity to do "big things". Despite the very different perspectives, I can honestly say that we have great love and respect for each other. In fact, Jona has brought a great deal of positive energy to our family dynamic. He has become the "go to" person in so many situations.

Jona's concern for others and his unique ability to actually do something for those in need, either by anticipating or by going to the essence of the issue and providing solutions, is very special. Permit me to share with you just a few small examples that illustrate this special quality.

My CPA firm has a mandatory retirement age for its partners and I was not ready to retire when I reached the designated age. Jona reached out to friends for me to meet to try to seek out job opportunities. In fact, Jona surprised me by signing me up for a first year gym membership to help provide purpose to my days. The gym has become a main core activity for me in my semi retirement state.

This past Sukkot holiday, we were in LA visiting Jona, Rachel and our grandchildren. A family was invited to dinner the first night. Their nine year old daughter had just completed chemotherapy and Jona instinctively knew that they could use an evening of diversion. Interestingly, the couple said that this was the only home they felt comfortable going to and being themselves. Additionally, a man in his sixties was in attendance at this sukkah meal, seated next to Jona. I noticed that the man was socially awkward and wondered to myself, what was he doing here? After the company left I asked Jona who this man was. Jona told me that this man was recently divorced and that Jona found out that he was going to eat his Yomtov meals alone, so Jona invited him. The next day, after synagogue services had concluded, I waited for Jona. When Jona was finally ready to go home I inquired as to why it took so long. Jona told me that he went to several congregants and asked them to have this man to their homes so that he would be surrounded by people for the rest of the holiday meals. This is just one small and recent example of Jona's sensitivity, care, and unique and special

qualities. I will not repeat the incredibly powerful stories of people whose lives were either transformed or impacted significantly by Jona's intervention. I'm sure you have received letters from many of those people.

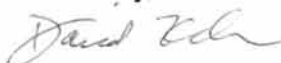
Jona has a very big heart, he sees opportunities, issues, problems and is focused on not talking but doing something to ameliorate the situation at hand. Jona is not a bystander but a doer. He feels someone's pain and tries to alleviate their suffering.

Jona's mistakes and actions, for which he has pled, were serious errors. His insecurity, need to be a mover and shaker, impress others, were serious flaws that caused great pain to him, his family and the Jewish people. He and his family have paid an enormous price for these mistakes. Jona and I have spent a lot of time talking about his behavior and sins. I can only say that he is different now. He is much more grounded, more family focused and is more thoughtful in his decision making. Rachel and Jona's decision to leave New York and move to LA was a good and sound one for them, although it was very painful to uproot themselves and dismantle their lives. Jona is working hard on his personal life, family life, and building a business to support his family.

I have no doubt that Jona will continue to do lots of good for his family, friends and community. The pain he suffered and continues to live with will be something that will help to guide Jona as he goes forward.

I respectfully hope that Your Honor will be able to grant Jona and his wonderful young family the second chance he needs to go forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "David Kahn".

David Kahn

Exhibit 11

Deborah Kahn

Teaneck, N.J.

September 1, 2019

Honorable Alvin K. Hellerstein
United States District Court
Southern District of New York
500 Pearl Street
New York, N.Y. 10007

Dear Judge Hellerstein:

I'm Debbie Kahn, Jona Rechnitz's mother in law. I need to share a story about one of the most pivotal and challenging times in my life. Two years ago, on the second day of Passover, my father died. Two of my married children, including Rachel and Jona, were with me at the time. My third child, with a family of 9, lives in Israel and wasn't here. The funeral was on a Thursday but my shiva period wouldn't start until the holiday ended the following week. Most people find this unusual interim period emotionally disconcerting and painful. During the funeral, Jona had an inspired idea. Unbeknownst to me, as we traveled from the funeral home to the cemetery, he called my children in Israel and convinced them to drop everything, pack up their clothes and go to the airport. They had only a few hours to agree to this outrageous idea and embark on a 12 hour flight that would bring my family together. Jona intuitively knew that family is the most important thing to me and would bring me comfort and strength. In record time, he convinced my Israeli children to come, booked and paid for their flights, arranged for a car service from the airport and ordered food for Shabbos without telling me a thing. We spent Shabbos and the last days of Passover all together as a family. My mother got to be with her children, all of her grandchildren and great grandchildren. Instead of being days of grief and despondence, they were days where we shared stories, memories and celebrated my father's legacy. Jona's role in this scenario didn't end there. He led everyone in song during the meals and engaged all of the children in games and activities all weekend. It was one of the most positive and meaningful holidays I have ever had.

I have tears streaming down my face as I write this letter. This was the greatest act of Chesed, kindness, sensitivity and generosity that anyone has ever done for me. Jona instinctively knew what would comfort me and support my family and me and didn't waste any time getting it done. Where other people think, "Wouldn't it be nice...", Jona thinks, "How can I do this?" Whether it's a shiva house, a hospital situation, someone who is out of work, the downtrodden and needy, Jona thinks out of the box and helps people overcome obstacles and alleviates their pain. Even if you don't realize that you need something, Jona senses and anticipates your need and solves your problem before it becomes a problem. He is embarrassed by thank yous and gestures of appreciation. He is uncomfortable receiving gifts for himself; he only wants to give to others. He often reverses our roles as he is so much happier doing things for me than having me do something for him.

I am truly blessed to have such a giving, caring, kind, sensitive and generous son in law. My world is a happier place with Jona in my life. I sincerely ask you to appreciate the big heart and kindness that Jona demonstrates regularly.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Deborah Kahn', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Deborah Kahn

Exhibit 12

Fred and Adi Kahn

██████████
Ramat Bet Shemesh, Israel

September 28, 2019

Honorable Alvin K. Hellerstein
United States District Court
Southern District of New York
500 Pearl Street
New York, NY 10007

Dear Judge Hellerstein,

15 years ago our lives were greatly enhanced as we welcomed Jona into the Kahn family. We were immediately taken by Jona's zest for life, love for people, and great sense of humor. As we got closer to Jona, we began to see the depths of the kindest human being we have yet to meet.

Soon after Jona came into our lives, our family decided to make a big step and move to Israel. Rachel, Jona's beloved wife was so distraught over the idea of us being thousands of miles apart. Jona was so attuned to Rachel, soothed her pain and worry, and vowed that they will come all the time to visit. He kept his word and visited us each Sukkot holiday and many surprise visits along the way. Each and every one of our children adores and respects their Uncle Jona- not just because he knows how to have a great time and treats them so well, but they see him as a person that has strong values, knows right from wrong, and will call them out if he feels that something they did was not OK. What we find very touching about Jona is that he always gives extra special love and attention to whichever kid he feels at that particular time period is struggling or is being misunderstood. He takes that kid aside, has heart to heart talks with them and makes them feel like a million dollars. Each Sukkot our families would spend a whole week together bonding and all activities were led by our very own "Super Head Counselor", Uncle Jona. Our family was always enthralled by how much *Tzedaka* (charity) Jona would freely give out to the poor people. One time, I'm actually embarrassed to say, that I asked Jona, "Jona, don't you think it's a bit much?" To which Jona replied, "I'm not giving to be *yotzei* (fulfill an obligation), I'm giving because I want to help in a real way." Needless to say I was speechless.

About 7 years ago, our family went through a very difficult challenge. Our son, ██████████, who was then 4 years old, fell onto hot coals that were left uncooled in a park. This resulted in 3rd degree burns on his hand and leg, and turned our life into a living nightmare. Yishai was in intense pain and needed us 24/7. I couldn't go to work, or even manage the house. It was a very depressing time in our life. Most people so far away were not able to comprehend what we were going through. But not Jona. I remember him calling and I cried to him about how hard it is to watch our child in such pain and that I'm just not coping. Jona cried with me and I felt so comforted. The next day, the doorbell rang, and to our disbelief and utter amazement, a delivery man is holding the biggest and coolest toy truck any of us had ever seen. Yishai's eyes were filled with glee. I saw my happy child again. And then comes the kicker. The delivery guy goes back to his car and brings back a huge box and says this is for you. I open it up and it's filled with platters of food for dinner for my family. I'm crying just thinking about that act of kindness.

Jona just got it, he knew exactly what we needed without me having to ask. That night was the turning point in our healing, the dark cloud was literally lifted by Jona's love for us.

As a social worker, I get to hear a lot of unfortunate stories. One day I got a referral for a young girl whose father abandoned the family and whose mother was mentally ill. After hearing about the girl, I asked if she had any siblings. The caller responded that the brother was learning in Yeshiva and that there's a generous man in the U.S. that is paying for his tuition. The caller said that this generous man bought him nice clothes so he can feel like a normal kid and even gave him spending money for the year so he should never feel deprived. I was so touched by the story. It was only a year later that I found out that the "generous man" in the story was my very own brother in law, Jona Rechnitz. (Just by the way, Jona continues to this day to treat this young man like a son and has literally saved his life.)

The past few years Jona's situation has been painful for many obvious reasons. But one less obvious to everyone is our personal hit that Uncle Jona has not been able to come visit us in Israel. This is beyond painful for our family. Throughout this ordeal, he has missed 2 of our son's bar mitzvahs, a huge loss for them. But Jona who has so much on his plate has tried in every way possible to make sure our families stay connected despite his legal restrictions. He flew in one son after his bar mitzvah in Israel to LA and gave him such a special one on one trip with Uncle Jona. It meant so much to our son. Last Sukkot, when we were all getting depressed that the Rechnitz's were still unable to fly to Israel, Jona decided to fly all 9 of us in to LA so that we would be able to still be together. Despite all that he's going through, he is desperate to ensure that we all be happy and that nobody should suffer from this.

Our brother in law has the biggest heart ever. His giving and kindness know no bounds. He inspires us to open our hearts and be better people. To know Jona is to love him. To be loved by him is truly heaven. We are so lucky to have such a beautiful and remarkable human being in our life.

Respectfully,

Fred and Adi Kahn

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Adi Kahn". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Exhibit 13

Joshua Kahn

Bergenfield, NJ

September 22, 2019

Honorable Alvin K. Hellerstein
United States District Court
Southern District of New York
500 Pearl Street
New York, NY 10007

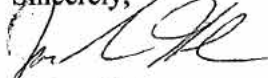
Dear Judge Hellerstein,

My name is Joshua Kahn and Jona Rechnitz is my brother-in-law. I have had the opportunity to get to know Jona for over 15 years. During that time I have seen Jona as a husband, father, son, son-in-law, brother-in-law, uncle, grandson, and grandson-in-law. From the very beginning, he earned the love and admiration of our entire family. My grandmother, who passed away about 3 years after Jona and my sister were married loved Jona as a grandson. The respect and sensitivity he showed to her quickly earned this affection. The same can be said for my other grandmother, to whom Jona shows great respect and care. On a personal level, I value the relationship Jona and I have. He is a sounding board whom I have turned to for guidance. When we were buying and then renovating our home, Jona helped us review the plan and guided us regarding design and appliances. His guidance and judgement were invaluable and he was always happy to lend his expertise. Additionally, as I was considering moving from my role as Associate Principal at Torah Academy of Bergen County to my current position as Head of School at Yeshiva University High School for Boys, Jona was a valued advisor.

Jona is focused on family, as has been evident to us on multiple occasions. One instance is when my grandfather passed away. Jona was focused on ensuring that our entire family would be together during this difficult time, even though it meant not being with his parents over the holiday and my brother's family joining us from Israel. Not only did Jona push the idea, but he took the initiative to make it happen, ensuring all of the arrangements would be taken care of. This commitment has also been clear to us under more mundane circumstance when two years ago he made arrangements for our family to fly to Los Angeles to spend winter break together.

Jona's sensitivity to others often stays under the radar. Two individuals come to mind who have been the beneficiaries of Jona "adopting them" to become part of his family. Jona has taken in Avi Levy, providing for his material needs. More importantly, Jona has seen to it that Avi feels like a part of the family, inviting him for holidays and other occasions. In an understated way, Jona does not discuss what he does for Avi or why, but simply includes him as if Avi was his brother. The same can be said for a friend of his, Ari, who went through a difficult divorce. Jona has included Ari in holiday, as well as family celebrations, simply because he knows that Ari does not otherwise have others who will do so. Please recognize that for each story I have shared, there are at least 10 more similar examples which illustrate the love and respect I feel for Jona, as well as the kind of person he has shown himself to be. I know that he has made mistakes for which he has accepted responsibility. However, these actions are out of character for the person I know. I hope you are able to provide him with a second chance to show the person he really is.

Sincerely,



Joshua Kahn

Exhibit 14

Martin Klein

[REDACTED]

Lawrence, N.Y. [REDACTED]

516- [REDACTED]

Honorable Alvin K. Hellerstein

United States District Court

Southern District of New York

500 Pearl Street

New York, N.Y.

Dear Judge Hellerstein,

I would like you to get to know the real Jona Rechnitz. Jona is in essence a very good and kind person who has much empathy for his fellow human beings

Jona has the gift of easily befriending people he comes in contact with. In fact that is how we met a number of years ago. We both had offices in the same building and had mutual friends. His outgoing personality has served as blessing in many cases. It enables him to empathize with and help the people he meets who are in need of compassion. He follows thru with practical and actual solutions. I can attest to this wonderful trait thru personal experience. I was traveling in Miami visiting my 30 year old son who was struggling with addiction and depression, and was in an extended stay at a rehab facility in the area. Jona was in Miami at the same time, and when he discovered my son's situation he immediately asked if there was some way he could be of help. When I explained that my son was ready to return to NY after being clean for more than six months, but he needed to find a job in a place he would be comfortable and most of all safe. Jona went out of his way to connect with him and then created a job suited to his talents in his own real estate office. My son was happy for the first time in many years. I don't know too many people who would do that!

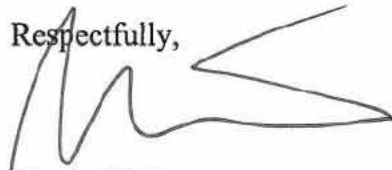
On the reverse side, Jona's outgoing personality and penchant for making friends easily, particularly with wealthy and influential people, has led him to make some immature and foolish decisions. Jona was young and immature in the ways of the world, and in his desire to be "somebody" and to impress certain influential people, he acted impulsively without giving himself time to process that he was doing things that were improper.

I can assure that Jona has suffered immeasurably from the fallout of his actions. The shame and embarrassment he has felt and continues to go thru, (which affected not just him, but his entire family), is multiple times more painful for him, as his life up until a few years ago was based on his pursuit of attention and rubbing shoulders with the "in" crowd.

I can attest to his suffering and to his new level of maturity. He no longer makes impulsive decisions, but rather takes time to think thru and consult with responsible people before proceeding on any project.

Taking into consideration, his immense (not an exaggeration) suffering for the last few years, and his cooperation with the authorities, I believe Jona has paid the price for his mistakes.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Martin Klein', with a stylized, elongated horizontal stroke at the end.

Martin Klein

Exhibit 15

09/08/2019

Abraham Levy

Woodmere, NY

347

Honorable Alvin K. Hellerstein
United States District Court
Southern District of New York
500 Pearl Street
New York, NY 10007

Your honor, I am writing to tell you about a man who if I said has saved my life, it would be an understatement.

My name is Abraham Levy, but I go by Avi. I have had a really rough upbringing with a divorce at home and lots of instability. My father had cheated on my mother and committed a crime which led to him being disbarred as an attorney. I was left alone living with my mother but she was not able to take care of me and I was frequently out and about with friends and fell into a bad lifestyle. When I was in high school I ultimately lost touch with both of my parents. I was left to fend for myself and moved into the dormitory at Yeshiva University High School for Boys. I was often times looking for leftovers in the cafeteria as I barely had any money to buy food for myself. It was in 11th grade when I was in Golan Heights restaurant frequented by Jona at the time. The manager had seen me frequent the location always looking for something to eat. One time - Jona happened to be there and the manager introduced me to Jona saying "this boy who lives on campus comes in here but he doesn't have any money to buy food" without hesitating Jonah immediately told the manager to open up a tab for me and that I would be eating for free from now on. Little did I know it but this introduction changed my life forever.

As I got through the rest of high school I decided I wanted to go study in israel for the year, after putting together different scholarship funds I was able to attend Yeshivat Lev Hatorah. Somehow around Sukkot time I bumped into Jona and he invited me to spend the first days of Sukkot with his family in Jerusalem. They welcomed me graciously during a time which is typically reserved for family. As we spoke over the holiday - Jona asked me how I was getting by in israel and if I had any spending money. I said I really don't...I have saved up around 500\$ or so but I knew it wouldn't last me too long. Again without hesitation Jona said I will deposit 500\$ in your account every month so that you can have a nice year and have spending money. I was really floored - It was beyond my wildest dreams. But indeed he deposited the money in my account every month without fail.

Later that year the school was taking a trip to poland to learn more about the holocaust and visit the concentration camps. Most of the school was going and I was a little upset I wouldn't be able to attend as there was no way I could afford it. I decided to ask Jonah if he would consider sponsoring my trip as I really wanted to go. Again, he said yes I will take care of it and he paid \$2,000 so that I could attend with my peers.

Next step was the summer. I was lucky enough to join my friends in Camp HASC taking care of children with special needs. As the summer was coming to an end I started to wish I can go back for another year of growth in Yeshiva. I didn't there was any way that can happen. After negotiating with the school they said I would need \$6,000 as a minimum to cover the costs. There was nothing they could do. I knew jonah had been kind to me but I didn't know if I could ask him. It was just too much. I decided to call him and talk about it. After he realized this was what I really wanted to do he graciously again agreed to pay for it. So that I can go back for another year. Which looking back I am grateful for.

Now I finished learning abroad and it was time for college. Due to my financial situation I was afforded a major scholarship to Yeshiva University. It covered the tuition but not room and board. I figured I was going to need to work long hours at night to have a chance to make it through, not knowing how I would keep up in a major dual curriculum and working simultaneously.

As I got back from israel about to start college I asked Jonah if I could join his family for Shabbat. I remember it clearly. I sat around the friday night table with Jonah and his wife. We were discussing my upcoming start to college. I was telling him I wasn't sure where I would be living as I wasn't sure if I could afford the dorms, and that maybe I would look for a shared apartment to cut some costs. But even that would be at least \$500 a month for rent and that without food and other supplies I would need. He said to me that night: "Avi - we are your family now, if you need something, you will have it. If things are tough and you need someone to talk to me and rachel are here for you - I will get you furniture for your apartment and put money in your account every month to cover your expenses". I was blown away never in my wildest dreams would this happen. He said I had a family now. This meant the world to me.

And so it was Jonah put money in my account every month for the next 3 years of college. He didn't just deposit money. He taught me to budget my expenses. He wanted me to learn to spend wisely. He actively cared about how I was doing. And if one month I had more expenses we would go over it and if it was indeed necessary he took care of it. He wanted me to spend smart, and took an active interest in my life. He was investing in my future.

Also during college I did have a rough time. I usually was able to go to Jonah on the weekends, but still I did get lonely and suffered mild depression. When I opened to jonah about this he immediately helped me find a therapist I was able to go to every week which he took care of and continued to do so until I felt I didn't need it anymore.

Throughout these years Jona always made me feel like part of the family. On every Jewish holiday I was with the Rechnitz's. Whether it was by his in laws, or in Israel or by his family in Los angeles. Wherever they went - I was flown out and stayed them wherever they were, whether in their homes, or at a hotel for passover programs, we were always together and I was always part of the family. Also before the Jewish Holidays Jonah's wife Rachel would take me to get clothing.

After college Jona helped me secure find my first job. I was a commercial real estate mortgage broker. When I realized it would be a difficult commute from Washington Heights to Long Island he graciously rented me a car for the summer in order to make sure I can be at work in a timely manner and stay as long as they needed me.

He told me this is where I wanted to get you - to enable you to support yourself, to bring you to a place of financial independence. I know you may not make money right away, but I am here. Keep working and I will be here to fill any gaps. Sure enough I bounced around a couple jobs looking for the right fit and not really making ends meet, but jona was always there if I needed him.

Today I am proud to be supporting myself as a Funding Specialist at The Funding Family. Earlier this year I had a rough few months not making ends meet and Jona was there again. But I now am proud to be fully supporting myself and off of financial support from Jona.

I do not know how I merited this but Jona Rechnitz was certainly sent to be my guardian angel. He is truly a special individual who cares for others and is always there to help in any way he can. I thank God every day for sending him into my life.

It hurts me a lot to see people who speak poorly of Jona. People who know he has helped me have said nasty things to me about him and I encountered a Twitter troll who was posting malicious things about Jona. I always stood up to his defense but it certainly troubled me dearly. He is really a selfless individual who thinks about how he can help others whenever an opportunity presents itself.

Your honor, please don't define Jona by mistakes that he made. I assure you that is not who he is. He is an honorable man who looks for ways to help others, even a stranger like me that he met in a restaurant.

I hope this gives you a little bit of insight into the man that Jona is.

Sincerely,
Abraham Levy



Exhibit 16

RABBI HASKEL LOOKSTEIN
125 EAST 85TH STREET
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10028

September 23, 2019

THE STUDY
212- [REDACTED]

Honorable Alvin K. Hellerstein
United States District Court
Southern District of New York
500 Pearl Street
New York, NY 10007

Dear Judge Hellerstein,

I am writing to provide you with personal information about Jona Rechnitz prior to sentencing. I am, of course, aware of his plea status and his cooperation with prosecutors in the case. I will leave to them the responsibility for addressing that.

I know Jona personally inasmuch as he is married to the former Rachel Kahn who was raised in our community and in Ramaz. I officiated at their wedding together with Chief Rabbi Shear Yashuv Cohen, of blessed memory, fifteen years ago. They are the parents of six children, ages thirteen to seven months. All of the school-age children are enrolled in Yavneh, a Modern Orthodox Yeshiva in Los Angeles.

I have discussed with Jona quite comprehensively his unlawful behavior. I am convinced that he is genuinely contrite and ridden with guilt for the things that he did even though it is my understanding that he never profited monetarily from any of those things. It was more a matter of ego enhancing, unfortunately in the wrong way. He is and was, basically, an insecure young man. The acts in which he engaged were related to that insecurity.

A graduate of Yeshiva University where he was President of the Student Council, he went on to work for a very big man and people came to him for favors. All of this went to his head and he became a *macher*. He is now a seriously guilt-ridden person who is trying his best to lead a much more private life. What bothers him most was that, as a person who was known for his religious behavior, his serious missteps created a big *chilul HaShem* in addition to destroying his and his family's formerly sterling reputation. He is devoting himself now to behaving in a manner which will slowly rebuild that reputation and reverse the *chilul HaShem* by private acts of *kiddush HaShem*.

In fact, except for doing everything now very privately and avoiding the public scene, Jona was already doing some remarkable things, especially in the realm of *chesed*. He was always involved in giving of himself and his substance for people in need. Like our forefather, Abraham, he sat – and continues to sit – on the threshold of his tent, looking outward for needs to fulfill. He doesn't wait for those needs to come to him. He seeks them out.

I believe you are aware of his extraordinary *chesed* toward a Yeshiva University student about whom he learned and whom he has helped in so many ways that, in effect, he has saved his life. This is just one example of what he does.

When Hurricane Sandy struck New York, Jona, who was then living in New York, was extremely generous with his funds and his time to provide relief to those who suffered from that Hurricane. Together with a philanthropist, Sam Domb, he both gives and raises money for poor families on the West Side for distribution before Rosh Hashanah and Passover. This has continued even since he moved to LA.

When he learns of a need, he goes to extraordinary lengths, not just to provide funds, but to do work that will help fill that need. When friends of his have had medical issues, he has gone out of his way to find the best doctors and sometimes he even goes to the doctor with them. When there is a loss in a family, he is one of those who will provide food for the family and try everything possible to make things easier in their recovery from the loss.

A word about his wife, Rachel. She has a full-time job raising six children. Nevertheless, she was and is heavily involved in Bikur Cholim. She learned *chesed* in her home and at Ramaz and now lives it in her adulthood.

Jona told me that Rachel warned him about the nature of the people with whom he was becoming associated when he violated the law. I don't think she was aware of the violations but she sensed that the people with whom he was consorting were leading him away from an honorable life. Sadly, he didn't take his wife's advice and now everybody has paid a very high price in terms of reputation and desecrating God's name.

Quietly and unobtrusively, Jona has taken on a stronger degree of religious observance, not excessive, just stronger. I believe he is doing that in the spirit of *teshuva* and also to make sure that he stays on the straight and narrow path. He tries to avoid any kind of public behavior. His good deeds are done anonymously.

He recognizes that he has made serious mistakes and he tried his best to cooperate with the prosecutors, something of which I believe you are aware. As such, he may actually be serving as a good example for others who may be in a similar situation now and in the future.

I hope that you will consider all of this information and decide on his sentencing by tipping to the side of *chesed* and *rachamim* – kindness and mercy.

Respectfully,



Haskel Lookstein

HL:df

Exhibit 17

Brocha Chana Metzger

Chabad of Midtown Manhattan
509 Fifth Avenue
New York NY 10017
917- [REDACTED]

September 23, 2019

Honorable Alvin K. Hellerstein
United States District Court
Southern District Court
500 Pearl Street
New York NY 10007

Your Honor,

Jona Rechnitz has a big heart. He cannot bear to see people suffer. While I have heard many stories of Jona's kindness, I have seen his generosity first hand.

In 2014, I tragically lost my eldest sister Rivkie Barber to Leukemia. She was 49 and lived in Australia leading a community as a beloved Rebbetzin and educator. The youngest of her six children was just nine years old. Barely two weeks after her passing, I spoke at our annual gala in Manhattan. I stood in front of a crowd of hundreds and told the audience about my sister Rivkie and what she meant to us. I got really choked up. I distinctly remember looking out at the audience and seeing Jona, his head bowed in the face of my anguish. It was clear that he could not bear to see my pain.

Later that evening, Jona approached me and asked how Rivkie's husband and children were faring and where they would be for Passover, which was just a week away. I replied that we were all in too much shock (and financially decimated) to make plans. Later that evening Jona stepped up to the plate and insisted on renting a Passover house for the family in Florida near friends. He wanted to sponsor the food as well. He also allotted spending money for each of my nieces and nephews. All told, Jona organized the entire Passover for Rivkie's orphaned family. His incredible kindness was beyond anything we had seen. My brother-in-law Rabbi Yanki Barber was dumbfounded. Jona's gift took so much pressure off the mourning family. He and the kids spent a meaningful, healing holiday in Florida, surrounded by friendly neighbors. Throughout the holiday, Jona checked in with them to ensure that all their needs were met. While our family was friendly with Jona, he barely knew my sister's family who lived in Australia. His kindness was a boon to us all at the most difficult time in our lives.

Another example of Jona's character is actually a series of good deeds. Our sister organization, Chabad Relief Project, provides food packages for the needy of New York. At our monthly food drive, volunteers gather to box food staples and distribute them around Manhattan. Few people have cars in the city center, and parking is scarce making these deliveries most challenging. When Jona heard of the difficulty in ferrying the packages to recipients, he organized a car service to facilitate the food distribution. The following month, he again sent drivers to pick up and deliver the boxes. This process repeated itself every month for many, many years. On his own dime, he ensured that shut-ins, unemployed, elderly and infirm people received their much anticipated supplies. He did this quietly and without fanfare. In fact, apart from the car service and our staff, no one knew who the benefactor was. It was Jona, time and again, helping out discreetly with a smile.

These are my personal stories. There are surely many more. It is my hope that Jona will now be given the opportunity to continue his charitable activities. People rely on his acts of goodness. His is a spirit of kindness that can continue to flourish for the benefit of so many.

Thank you for your consideration.

Brocha Chana Metzger

BrochaChanaMetzger

Exhibit 18

Jared Rechnitz

[REDACTED]

New York, NY [REDACTED]

9/27/2019

Honorable Alvin K. Hellerstein

United States District Court

Southern District of New York

500 Pearl Street

New York, NY 10007

Dear Judge Hellerstein,

I am writing you today, to offer a perspective, on who my brother Jona really is, as a brother, a son, a parent, a friend, and a professional.

In my family, we are three siblings, Jacqueline, Jona, and me. I am the youngest by 8 years, and while in some cases that may mean a gap in connection between siblings, in our case it is not, and that is all because of Jona. Jona is a warm and inviting person, and brightens up a room with love and happiness. Family is and always has been his number one priority, and he always made sure my sister and I were included in every activity, every conversation, and every joke. I was never treated as a younger brother, but rather, Jona was always a sort of parent to me. I have always and continue to look up to Jona for many of his qualities. I would like to name a few of those qualities through my lens as his brother. It is because of Jona, that in my 29 years, I cannot remember a single serious fight Jona and I have ever had, as Jona always puts me first. He was always the first person to apologize, even if he was not in the wrong, as he consistently puts my needs before his. It is because of Jona, that every member of my family ends any phone call with each other with, "I love you", before hanging up. It is because of Jona that I have become a more open person with how I am feeling. I tend to hold things in and keep them to myself, however, Jona has a way of always figuring out what I need at any given moment without a word. One such instance of this really burns in my mind, although Jona probably does not even remember it, as his generous and caring personality comes so naturally to him. I had just come out of a difficult relationship, and I was having a very hard time dealing with it. Jona and Rachel were living in Los Angeles for the summer and I was alone in New York in school. Jona sensed something in my voice and within an hour of us hanging up, he sent me details to a flight he had booked for me to Los Angeles. I came home for the weekend and spent a much needed weekend with my family because of Jona. This generous behavior is not the moment of this story that I am writing about. You see, this story is not about how Jona paid for my flight to

Los Angeles. This is about my ride back to the airport when it was time to return home. The airport is just a thirty-minute ride from my parents' house, and generally I take a cab. This particular trip it was very hard to leave, and without a word Jona sensed it. He insisted on taking me to the airport himself, so we could spend some time together and talk. I can tell you confidently, that the thirty-minutes we spent together really changed my entire outlook and state of mind, and I left with a good feeling. Jona's generosity is so much more than monetary support he has given to so many worthy charities and individuals in need. Jona is one of those special people that helps you in any way, be it emotionally or mentally, but yet makes you feel good about it, and never less of yourself for needing help.

While Jona and Rachel still lived in New York, they lived only a few blocks away from me. I spent almost every Shabbat with them, and they always encouraged me to bring guests. You can tell a lot about someone by who he hosts at his Shabbat table. People often host friends, business colleagues, and family, but not Jona. More often than not, Jona's table was filled with guests who may not have been invited out, were forgotten about, or were alone. New York is a big community, and many people slip through the cracks, even with all the Shabbat programs. Some people don't feel comfortable asking for a meal or a place to go. Jona always had a way of seeking out those people and making them feel very wanted and welcome. It is not an exaggeration at all when I say that Jona and Rachel's Shabbat table hosted widows, orphans, divorcees, people new to the community, foreigners, and just people who were in need. It was a common routine that on many Friday nights, we would walk into the apartment, and Jona would whisper to Rachel that we needed another place setting, as he invited someone in synagogue who didn't have a meal. He would then proceed to make this last minute guest feel as if they were the most important person in the room, seating the guest next to him, so they could speak them the whole night.

Another characteristic I look up to Jona for, is how he is as a parent. He has a way of making each child feel included in everything, but yet special individually at the same time. It is very impressive to me how involved he is as a father in every aspect of his children's lives. It is very gratifying to see how so many of his wonderful qualities are starting to manifest themselves in my nieces and nephews. Jona's oldest son, my nephew Simcha just celebrated his Bar Mitzvah. A story came up during his bar mitzvah that I had never known, but in hearing it, made perfect sense. Jona and Rachel hosted a charity event at their home in New York when Simcha was younger, as they often did. At the event, there was a collection bowl for checks which would go to the organization. After the event, when Jona and Rachel were organizing the checks, they got to the bottom of the bowl, and found a five-dollar bill with a note stapled to it that said "from Simcha". These are the kind of qualities to which Jona is passing down to his children on a daily basis.

One of Jona's best characteristics is his involvement in the community. Jona has never been one to stand idly by when he can make a difference. The amount of drama and often involved in organizations, schools, and charities, tends to scare many people away, but not Jona. When Jona believes something is right or that he can help the community in any way, he always steps up. So many times, I would be at his home watching him on the phone at very late hours, settling other people's personal or business disputes, just to make peace between them. Many of these late night calls involved ways to improve the local schools or synagogues. I think during this trying time of the last few years, it has been especially hard for Jona to not be able to be as involved in helping the community. I know how much it has deeply hurt him, that people have

removed him from boards, asked him to step down, or have turned their back on him. Many of these individuals have been former close friends, or people that Jona has helped tremendously in many ways. As my big brother, Jona's main concern has still been for me not to worry about his situation, always putting on a strong face for me, and telling me that everything is ok. However, I know that nothing has been ok. Jona is not the person he is portrayed to be in many media outlets. It has been incredibly painful on Jona and my entire family to read and hear negative things about him. People can be extremely cruel, and have been so on many occasions. Jona moved to Los Angeles a couple of years ago, as he was essentially chased out of New York. He could not go anywhere without receiving a dirty look or a malicious comment. People pushed for synagogues to kick him out. If he dared enter a restaurant to order dinner, pictures quickly circulated of him, demeaning him as if he had no right to live. Unfortunately, this is one of the downsides of being part of a very insular community. Rumors, whether true or not travel very fast. Even once he moved to Los Angeles, the attacks did not stop. A video was circulated, in which a man approached a car that Jona was driving with Rachel, where the man starts berating Jona and even Rachel with harassing questions. Around the same time, a picture circulated in which Jona was eating dinner with Rachel at a local restaurant. These videos and pictures were not filmed secretly, but rather by people holding a camera right up to Jona's face, to shame him and Rachel for being out in any way. The past few years have been a personal hell for Jona, and he has paid the price for his actions tenfold. This price however, was not only reserved for Jona, but for anyone by association. Rachel has been shunned by many former friends, his kids have been looked down upon, and many venomous remarks have been spat at my parents. I personally still live in New York, and it has affected me terribly as well. In our dating world, people often meet through being set-up. In fact, Jona and Rachel have made several matches who are now married. However, while I was dating, there were several instances in which Jona's situation affected my relationships. Many people were very quick to approach whoever I was dating at the time, or her parents, and let them know what a horrible person my brother is, or that they should stay away from my family. I was kicked off of recreational sports teams I had played on for years, I was ignored on the street, and even professionally or at school I get the question of "are you related to Jona Rechnitz". As difficult as this has been for me, it has been worse for me to see the tremendous burden of guilt Jona feels for having brought this upon us. So much so, that I have kept many of these instances from him to this day, as I know the guilt and regret would be too difficult to carry around, as he is suffering from it too much as it is. In a few days we will be celebrating the High Holidays, which are a time for repentance and redemption. A few years back around this time, Jona wrote a letter to the entire family, in which he apologized deeply for how his actions have affected us, and let us know how much he loves us. Every word of this letter is etched in my mind, as I cannot begin to fathom the pain and suffering Jona has felt over these last few years. There has been no escape or reprieve from the situation, and the maliciousness thrown his way, and towards his family. I remember a few years back when My father, Jona, and I were sitting in our family synagogue during the High Holidays. This was not just an ordinary synagogue, but a synagogue we have prayed in for three generations, and which is attached to the school we have attended for three generations. During this time, it is customary for the synagogue to hold an appeal for charity to support it by selling certain services during the prayer. Jona wanted to buy one of these services to honor my father, especially considering everything we were all dealing with during Jona's situation, but he did not want the attention that goes along with bidding. As such, he bought this honor anonymously for my father, as well as the Rabbi of the congregation, who is a close friend of Jona's, and who provided much needed

advice to Jona during this time, on matters of Jewish law. One member of the congregation made it his business to figure out who purchased the honor, and then proceeded to leave services in the middle, subsequently going to a different synagogue to spread the word of Jona's donation to purchase the honor. This service was solely meant as both an act of gratitude towards my father, and charity towards the synagogue. Furthermore, within hours of the conclusion of the holiday, the same individual contacted the New York Post, and there was an article in the newspaper about it, demeaning Jona and his selfish spending. Jona's punishment has been very severe for his actions, as it has seeped into every aspect of his and our lives, be it professionally, emotionally, and even religiously. During this time of repentance, I can assure you that Jona regrets and has paid for his actions enough. Furthermore, while many ask me "are you related to Jona Rechnitz", expecting embarrassment, I can wholeheartedly say "yes" and I am very proud that he is my brother, as I know the person that he really is.

Your Honor, I ask that you consider all the pain and suffering that Jona and my family have already endured when determining his future. I especially ask that you consider the side of Jona that was not in the news. Jona the caring brother and best friend, Jona the involved father to his children, Jona the helping hand, Jona the generous shoulder to lean on- the real Jona.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jared Rechnitz". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping initial "J" and a long, horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jared Rechnitz

Exhibit 19

Jona Rechnitz

Los Angeles, CA

October 16, 2019

Honorable Alvin K Hellerstein
United States District Court
Southern District of New York
500 Pearl Street
New York, NY 10007

Dear Judge Hellerstein:

I am a felon. I am a criminal. I am the ONLY person to blame for that.

I have caused tremendous pain and embarrassment to my family, my religion, and to myself.

There is no way to undo what's been done. It's permanent, and for that I am truly sorry to everyone hurt by my crimes and actions. It eats me alive each and every day. When I wake up, when I go to sleep, it is always on my mind for the past 4 years.

My actions harmed the people of New York, The people of Correction Officers Benevolent Association, my friends, my family and my community. I will forever carry this burden, as I deserve to.

I have read of your Honor asking at various sentencings, why do good people do bad things?

In my case, not assuming I'm a good person, I can answer this question. Arrogance, greed, and insecurity.

Arrogance. I felt I was above the law. At this young age in my late 20's I was busy accepting honors at dinners and board positions at prestigious institutions. It got to my head.

Greed. I wanted to gain contacts to grow my business, to make money and gain stature in the long run.

Insecurity. I wanted to gain popularity by my peers and become a big shot in my community and business circles.

Shame on me.

Finally, I couldn't wiggle my way out of this one. It changed my life as I knew it forever.

As a supposed religious man, I have been a disgrace to my religion. The only way to fix this is to make serving G-d my main focus for the rest of my life. I try to every day. I have changed as a person religiously, through prayer, my public and private behavior, and I always stop and think before I'm about to do something to see if it is something my parents, my family, and G-d would approve of.

Making the decision to come forward was the right decision. A very tough decision with tremendous repercussions, but the appropriate decision. It has come with a hefty price. I did not foresee what I was signing up for, and it has been a brutal four years, but I made the right decision. I learned that doing the right thing isn't always the easiest, but it is the only choice. There is right and wrong and nothing in between. It has changed me for the better. It has forced me to change, which I have.

I had to testify in three separate trials. Not an easy task. Outside of the regular pressures a crucial witness deals with, these circumstances were even tougher. There was a lot of press coverage, a lot of community pressure, and a lot of threats and comments made to me. The press put me on trial instead of the defendants. The press called me a snitch and paid more attention to me and my testimony than on the actual trials. They made calls to my friends, my family, and waited outside my home for me to walk outside.

Parts of the community shunned me and my family. Your honor, I can not stress the amount of pain and suffering that we received during this time. Unimaginable pain. Eventually we had to leave town. Leave our lives. Leave immediately.

Then there were the threats and private investigators after me. Threatening voice messages, windows smashed at home, windows smashed in my car several times and my parents cars on the same day at their home, people following me and sitting outside of my home in Los Angeles for periods of time. My wife and I were harassed and video taped at the mall, humiliated in our Synagogue, and embarrassed in public at a local LA high school charity event.

Your Honor, there are so many examples that I am omitting as I don't want to portray myself as the victim here. I caused a lot of pain and harm to others through my criminal activity and don't want to detract from that.

Even at various trials there were intimidation tactics. An attorney representing a defendant yelled at me in the hallway walking in to court and shoved the prosecutor when he confronted him.

The disgusting feeling I had waking up in the morning to go to trial after trial after trial. Sometimes for a week and a half straight.

One of the toughest moments was when a mistrial was declared. I remember feeling like I wanted to tap out. But I could not. I made this decision for me and my beautiful family with the hope of staying together with them at the end of this nightmare. This has been the key factor keeping me going. My family. My amazing, incredible wife and my beautiful 6 children.

The highlight of my week used to be sitting in NYPD Headquarters like a big Macher. Today, my highlight is walking to Synagogue with my children every week, and I let them know it every time we walk. When I ask them what my favorite part of the week is, they say, Daddy! You know the answer, but I still make them repeat it.

Your Honor, I can now tell you proudly I am a hands-on father and husband. I am more of a mentsch. I was not during my criminal years. For that alone, I am grateful to this situation. My wife is an amazing woman. She had a bad feeling about the people I was hanging out with and the people I wanted to impress. She was right. I should have listened to her. I do now.

I had real estate holdings which I had to give up throughout this ordeal. Many investors didn't want to be associated with me, nor do I blame them. In a few cases, some partners viewed my situation as an opportunity forcing me to give up different holdings and assets, taking management decisions and authority from me, ultimately removing me entirely. Starting to make a living again was a struggle for a period of time. Fortunately my wife and I started a new business endeavor, which looks promising. As your Honor can imagine it is hard to find a bank to work with me, so I have secured private loans and financing from family and friends. I finally have a business going that has provided stability and a way to make a living. This case has left me in a big financial hole - I have had to borrow millions of dollars to get this business going and to support my family. I am finally in a position to dedicate myself again to supporting my family. I don't see any way possible to start over a third time. I beg you to allow me to continue on this second journey of life.

This has been a difficult time. I don't feel healthy at all. I am on anti depressant medication, I wake up in the middle of the night in pain and my neck and hands are burning, and I will forever carry this guilt.

Family is everything to me. Cuddling with my children is everything to me. Being a community member and helping others is everything to me. Since this entire ordeal my wife gave birth to two beautiful baby girls. A decision that we made to not put life on hold but to continue with life in the right path and be optimistic that doing the right thing will not hinder our future.

I am a changed man. I suffered a lot. I have been severely punished. My family has suffered a lot. I beg your Honor, please allow me to continue on the path I'm on, together with my family, my wife and 6 young children. They need their Daddy, I need my family together with me, and I promise your Honor, to continue to make

my family proud, my community proud, and your Honor proud.

With humility and sincerity,

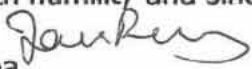

Jona

Exhibit 20

Melanie Rechnitz

Los Angeles, CA

September 20, 2019

Dear Judge Hellerstein,

My name is Melanie Rechnitz. I am Jona Rechnitz's mother.

I am writing to share with you the essence of the character of my son Jona and what I believe this experience has taught him.

Jona grew up with loving parents and two siblings, and was surrounded by four grandparents, each one teaching him about giving, sharing and kindness towards others. Everybody's love for him was boundless and he responded in kind, to the point where he even slept on his grandfather's bedroom floor or slept on a hospital chair when his grandfather was ill. Even as a child, Jona had a non-judgmental personality and always befriended the underdog. He included everyone he met in his circle of friends and never allowed anyone to be left behind. His caring disposition made him beloved by both young and old.

Although I come from a family of doctors, when my youngest sister (whose husband is a radiologist) was diagnosed with an incurable brain tumor, Jona took it upon himself to research alternate options in both the United States and abroad. His tireless efforts led to a treatment plan that extended my sister's life.

In this spirit, Jona has always gone the extra mile to help others. He raised money for victims of hurricane Sandy, sat alongside a friend whose child was undergoing cancer treatments and mentored a young man through his education and life journey. These are just a few examples of Jona's kindness and care for others. His generosity of heart and spirit propelled Jona to be beloved, and his anonymous acts of kindness were and remain many until today.

I used to tell my husband, "Jona will be the one to make us old, but when we are old, Jona will be the one to take care of us." Jona's big heart is what drives him forward and this is also part of his imperfection.

I admit that my son Jona, like most of us, is not perfect. He has made mistakes. I do not make excuses for his behavior and wish as a parent, I would have prepared him better with tools to face the world and its challenges and temptations. I believe that Jona has learned from his mistakes and takes responsibility for his behavior. Jona, his wife and his children had to uproot themselves from New York where they were ostracized from their community and relocate themselves to Los Angeles. Jona has struggled to rebuild himself in this new community, where he encountered social negativity, as well as in the

business world, where he often had the door closed to him.. The psychological impact of his actions as well as coming forward and cooperating with the government, has taken a toll on his mental and physical health. But Jona has taken full responsibility for his actions and has come forward trying to do the right thing.

As painful as this experience has been for our entire family, it has been a most humbling experience for Jona, providing lessons that are hard learned. As a parent, I have watched and witnessed the suffering and struggles that my son Jona has wrestled with, and I truly feel that he has evolved as a human being and has been punished enough. He has already paid a high price. I believe that Jona has the ability to use this experience as a life lesson and change the course of his actions and the direction of his future.

Moving forward, I humbly request that you give my son Jona, the opportunity to take these lessons that he has learned and use them towards building a better and more meaningful future for himself, his family and the community. I believe it will be one which will make us all proud.

Respectfully yours,



Melanie Rechnitz

Exhibit 21

Rachel Rechnitz

Los Angeles, [REDACTED]

October 15, 2019

Honorable Alvin K. Hellerstein
United States District Court
Southern District of New York
500 Pearl Street
New York, NY 10007

Dear Judge Hellerstein:

This is an extremely difficult thing for me to do, to put into words and properly express my thoughts regarding Jona and the entire situation that we have been living through for the past four years or so. I am a deeply religious person who has always felt a strong connection to Gd. I don't view it as a coincidence at all that Jona's day of sentencing is taking place right after Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, as Gd truly does run the world and controls our fate. Over these last four years, my prayers on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur have taken on a new depth. I find my head spinning with so much to be grateful for, and still, so much to beg and request from Gd. These last four years have been incredibly challenging. I had to move from my home in New York City, leave my friends and family, and take my children out of their school and their community. I know that it was the right move and I am grateful to be able to live in LA for the primary purpose of protecting my children and sparing them from being embroiled in a potentially hurtful environment. My children are first and foremost in my life and I always want to be able to shield and protect them to the best of my ability. In LA, people haven't been dragged into this ugliness with hurtful comments, exposure to the New York Post, or having reporters outside their building. However, our lives have changed in many ways, some good and some bad. I believe that Gd gives you what you can handle and I think a lot of good has resulted from this. I can see that my husband has become a much better, humble, more open and truthful person. To me, that is incredibly important and necessary in a marriage and in our family. Jona is much more involved as a father and as a husband and has revamped his priorities. He is someone whom I trust and who makes me proud. Jona got lost in trying to be a big shot, a mover and shaker, and got sucked into wanting to be with powerful people. I honestly believe that this has been made so public in order for him to learn from his mistakes and genuinely change as a person. I am, therefore, not upset at all with Gd for bringing this upon us. However, these last few years have been very challenging. Having Jona away for weeks at a time took quite a toll on us. Testifying against people with whom he was once close and who are members of our Jewish community is difficult beyond words. There are so many people that I have to avoid or feel uncomfortable with, having them talk behind my back, not to mention the awful articles that were printed again and again.

I genuinely feel that this has all happened for a reason and I am grateful for the dramatic changes that I have seen in my husband. I know and trust that these changes

are here to stay. What has sustained me over the last few years was the knowledge that my children have been spared from being in the center of gossip, slander and hurtful actions. As I stated before, my number one priority is protecting my children. Please keep that in mind when sentencing Jona. He is innately a very good person with a very big heart, probably the biggest heart of anyone I know. He would and does do anything in his power, and even beyond his power, to help others, regardless of whether it's a family member, friend or total stranger. This is Jona. Please allow us the chance to rebuild our lives. Please have Jona come back to me and to our six children. I believe that out of hardships, you can either fall down and fail or you can learn and grow stronger. Thank Gd our marriage has grown stronger from this terrible ordeal. Jona has learned very important lessons the hard way. I pray that we can now move forward towards building new and better lives together.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Rachel', followed by a long, horizontal, wavy line that extends across the page.

Rachel Rechnitz

Exhibit 22

Robert Rechnitz

Beverly Hills, CA

Honorable Alvin K. Hellerstein
United States District Court
Southern District of New York
500 Pearl St.
New York, NY 10007

Dear Judge Hellerstein

I am sorry to say that Jona by his acts, lost his integrity and acted hypocritically to his faith. Notwithstanding his goodness and his affinity for helping others, he crossed the line that could never be reversed for the rest of his life. Regardless of his state of maturity at the time, his decision impacted him and his entire family as it has consumed us for the past nearly four years.

When Jona decided to come forward and notify the government, he immediately called a family meeting and apologized to my wife, myself, and each sibling for his transgressions. He continues to apologize to us and express regret until this date. He carries the burden of shame for what he caused our family.

Growing up, Jona was always a great source of pride for us. My wife and I constantly enjoyed compliments from parents of friends, elderly people, the New York community on the West Side once they moved there, and business associates. Never would I have believed that Jona could be involved in the crimes that took place.

I offer no excuses for his actions which were contrary to the way that he was brought up and to the examples in our family.

I do, however, understand that with his business success at a young age, came a lot of immaturity and impulsive decisions. I too, share in the responsibility for so many of Jona's actions. It was unfair of me to allow Jona to take so many responsibilities upon himself without my guidance and involvement. In a quest to prove himself independent and become a mover and shaker in the New York community, we saw his personality take a different course. I should have seen the warning signs and intervened early on. Everything happens for a reason and no doubt G-d sent him a message that will serve him well for the rest of his life. Jona is a bit codependent and is happy to always come through for people and organizations. Sadly he had a dose of reality by watching those organizations turn their back on him because you are only as good as the last favor you did for them. This too was a very good lesson for him going forward.

Your Honor, with all the pain this experience has brought, I have seen Jona repent on every level. He suffered tremendous financial losses in real estate as a result of partners taking advantage of his position as a felon to take away his promoted equity on investments. The group that took this away from him are supposedly Jewish community leaders. I believe that is another good lesson for Jona to learn. You don't wear religion on your sleeve you wear it in your heart. How you act from one person to another reflects who you are. There is no concept of "Between man and G-d, "If there is no respect "Between man and fellow man."

Jona lost his direction but he is now solidly back on track practicing and appreciating the most important elements of being a self-respecting person.

He together with Rachel and their six children have relocated to LA. They have established a much more humble life for themselves. He is back to the basics of living and maintaining a family. He still participates together with Rachel in all their acts of kindness to others. He is still a friend that anyone can lean on. The quality time that he spends with Rachel and the children, by far exceeds the time that he spent with them when he was moving at a fast pace in New York.

The move has done them well and Jona is building a new business. He lives with the shame and the pain of what he did and what he caused to others. On the other hand he did not wait for any further action on behalf of the government but he immediately took ownership of his crimes and offered his full support and cooperation with the government. Out of concern for Halacha, he sought guidance from his friend and Rabbi, Shlomo Einhorn who sought guidance from Rabbi Herschel Shachter.

Jona is a very sensitive individual and is always concerned about doing the right thing. Your Honor, I must say that the way that he is repenting and has changed his life and learned from his mistakes, is doing the right thing. Jona has a wife and six children and they need him to be home and a constant part of their life after these last turbulent four years.

Your Honor, I plead for leniency for my dear son, so that he can continue to maintain the stable family and not lose the improvements that he has made. Six children need two parents care.

Humbly,

Robert Rechnitz



Exhibit 23

Steve Rechnitz

Los Angeles, CA

10/15/19

Honorable Alvin K. Hellerstein
United States District Court
Southern District of New York
500 Pearl St.
New York, NY 10007

Dear Judge Hellerstein:

Words alone cannot express the shock I had - the lingering shock that remains - learning my cousin Jona was involved in perpetrating of the crimes he committed. Any way I look at it, it just does not reconcile.

We are a considerable size of cousins in our family. Growing up as a sort of herd around our grandparents, Jona was hands down the "goody goody". We all knew he was the favorite and it was for good reason. Jona had a heart of gold and would wait on our grandparents hand and foot. Even as they aged into their nineties, it was rare for him to leave their sides during his trips back home to Los Angeles. And as they aged, and we saw less of them, Jona became closer to them. Spending nights in the hospital with both of them when their respective names were being called, he was their constant. No one can forget the excitement that filled the room when Grandma and Grandpa learned that Jona was coming to Los Angeles to visit - and for good reason. He was always the first to volunteer for any task that came up. No matter how difficult or unappealing. My brother, who owns Nursing Homes in the Los Angeles area, always says that Nursing Homes were made for older people who don't have a Jona in their lives. He is truly the last person I would have attached these crimes to, and it is the reason that the shock lingers.

Jona comes from a family of community leaders. He grew up spending much of his spare time, and under the tutelage, of our grandparents, who, with other Holocaust survivors, dedicated the remaining years of their lives to re-establishing their, once thriving, community in Poland back in Los Angeles. As a child he witnessed as brick by brick they re-built their lives, and the lives of their loved ones, by rebuilding institutions of learning, synagogues, community centers, and most importantly, the lives of the downtrodden, the depressed, the lonely, the ones that could no longer continue living with the fear, the orphans, the widowed and even the rebellious - he watched as they were all successfully rebuilt brick by brick. And the current generation has continued along that path. All one has to do is to google the name Rechnitz to read about a family that is synonymous with building. Be it giving to schools or medical centers or the hopes of our wounded warriors. Those impacted especially hard by hurricanes created by winds of the ocean or of the

heart, the Rechnitz family is at the forefront of families that continuously outstretch their arms to help build back, brick by brick.

As a member of the family, I don't write this to be haughty or to request leniency based upon past performance. I write this to attempt to give insight into Jona and his actions. Jona is not some mastermind criminal driven by greed and the need to control, as he has been so depicted in some of the press. He has always been about the little things – little instances where he thought he could help and make a difference - just like his grandparents did, but on a smaller scale. However, after all was said and done, and how grossly misguided his attempts, it really, really was always just about helping with the little things.

"Lights and sirens"

A funeral is being held and the remains must make it to the airport for its final resting place in Israel. Let's try to reach Jona as, through his connections, he can get a police escort to JFK.


There's a Jewish pride parade being held next Sunday but the city is not allowing for street closures past 86th st. We'll call Jona as he has an "in" with the Mayor and he can get us the required permit.

As others may dream about getting the ball at the 3-point line with five seconds to go in the championship series, the above thoughts were Jona's dreams; they are but examples of what drove Jona, in what became his deluded attempt to help with the little things. Knowing him as we all did and always witnessing his desire to help others I place serious doubt that his crimes were driven by an attempt to strong-arm people or even to reap financial gain from the connections he yearned to develop. Far from it. That was never part of his fabric. His satisfaction always came from helping us - all of us - with the little things, which unfortunately, led to an unwise and foolish attempt to emulate what he continuously witnessed growing up. The difference being that they knew there were no shortcuts; it had to be done brick by brick.

Your Honor, looking back at what I write I seem to be creating an excuse for his actions but, pray, that is not my intent. There are no justifications. I do, however, come to offer insight into how a person who's heart and soul are good, who has always yearned to be good, who grew up surrounded by good and who has always pursued good, could end up doing bad. And it is with this insight that, as a member of our extended family, I humbly request that Your Honor consider extending mercy on his behalf.

Thank you kindly for your consideration.

Respectfully,



Steve Rechnitz

Exhibit 24

Dr. Mordechai Rindenow

[REDACTED]
Clifton, NJ [REDACTED]

October 16, 2019

Honorable Alvin K. Hellerstein
United States District Court
Southern District of New York
500 Pearl Street,
New York, NY 10007

To the honorable Judge Hellerstein,

My Name is Mordechai Rindenow.

I am both a Rabbi and psychologist and am writing to you on behalf of Mr. Jonah Rechnitz.

I was introduced to Mr. Rechnitz three years ago while working with my client who, at that time, had also been dealing with a federal indictment. I was very impressed with Jonah's willingness to assist my client in a process to fully come to terms with the realities of my client's participation in the crime that was committed. It was a reflection of his very difficult and painful journey to face the regretful behaviors in which he had engaged.

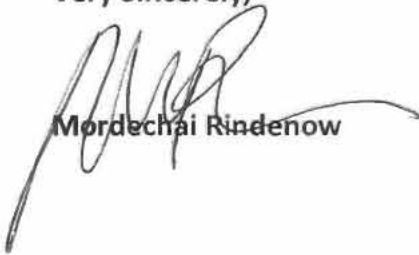
His genuine remorse for having been involved in activities that, to him, had become very shameful was quite evident. Throughout years of my association with Jonah, it became apparent that Jonah had worked to transform himself to an individual who recognized with great clarity the wrongfulness of his behaviors, both in the legal and moral realms. He has evolved through a painstaking process of stripping away all the rationalizations and denials pertaining to his actions and his motives to become an individual that has displayed true care and concern for others in need.

Mr. Rechnitz would share his time advising and guiding people experiencing difficult times in their lives. He reached out to them in a manner in which he manifested both genuine empathy and compassion. He contributed charitable monies, most times in a discreet fashion, in which no great fanfare was made of the monetary assistance he offered. There were times, where Mr. Rechnitz was able to rally the support of others for worthy charitable causes.

Jonah has returned, with sincerity, to the traditions, practices, principles and mores of his Jewish upbringing. He values and finds comfort in his relationship with G-d.

Mr. Rechnitz came to understand the importance of family. He has devoted much time in an effort to undo the hurt and pain that he brought upon his wife and family. Your honor, Jonah's children are very young and they need their father. Jonah is a person who has learned much and gained great insight into understanding himself and human nature. I speak with confidence, when I tell you that I believe, Jonah is a changed man. I have come to admire Mr. Jonah Rechnitz, as a model of the potential the human spirit possesses to facilitate transformation.

Very Sincerely,



Mordechai Rindenow

Exhibit 25

Danny Rotenberg

[REDACTED]

Brooklyn, NY [REDACTED]

September 27th 2019

Honorable Alvin K. Hellerstein

United States District Court

Southern District of New York

500 Pearl St

New York, NY 10007

Dear Judge Hellerstein:

My name is Danny Rotenberg. It has been my honor to know Jona Rechnitz from a very young age. I had pleasure of being his Rebbe and teacher over the years and watched him grow into a mature young man bringing joy and pleasure to his parents and grandparents. He was always a caring and thoughtful boy, who would make sure that all his peers would be treated with care. Jona would without a thought for he would give away his last snack or dime so that another should have. "Sharing is caring" describes best to Jona as this was one of the best characteristics he built himself on. I always treasured our time together as he gave to me sometimes more than I could give to him.

Jona worked as a counselor in my camp during his teenage years. As a counselor he got along well with the campers and other staff members because he would treat everyone with respect. During this period of time I had glimpse of the man he would become, a kind and G-D fearing person. This was the way of life that he inherited from his grandfather and father.

Before we moved to New York I had the chance to meet with Jona and discussed with him all the pro and cons regarding the change to New York. I wanted to move to New York because I have an autistic child and wanted him to be in a Jewish environment. I reached out to Jona and he helped me by making calls and putting me in touch with the right schools for my son. After much time together I relied on his advice to take a plunge and move.

At that time I tried looking for work in the field that I had been all my working life, however after many hours of searching I was not successful in finding the right type of work. I contacted Jona and we set up a time to meet in his office. I cannot relate to you the feeling of working my entire life and now left with no options. I met with Jona and without a moment's thought Jona assured me that he himself would employ me and give me a job which really was different from anything I had done, and without a moment's thought, Jona was able to give me work so that I was able to support my family. Even though I was no longer teaching and doing a job that I was not familiar with Jona was proactive in making sure that I was treated with the up most respect and taken care of even when I was sick and unable to work for a period of time.

In conclusion Jona always tries to remain in the background when helping others; however he is usually the main drive behind every action of kindness. If you need any more information please feel free to contact me.

Yours Sincerely,

Danny Rotenberg

213 [REDACTED]

Exhibit 26

Shea and Mariam Schwebel
[REDACTED]

New York, NY [REDACTED]

9/25/19

Honorable Alvin K. Hellerstein
United States District Court
500 Pearl Street
New York, NY 10007

Dear Judge Hellerstein,

My wife and I are in our late 50's and have been living on the Upper West Side of Manhattan for the past 36 years. I am a Real Estate manager and the chairman of the board of Yeshiva Ketana of Manhattan on West 89th st and my wife was president of the school PTA for many years. We are both active in many charitable organizations and local projects over the years.

We met Jona Rechnitz and his wife Rachel about 12 years ago when they moved to our neighborhood. They immediately became active in the community. My wife and I were so impressed as we watched this young couple with a beautiful growing family make charity events in their home, help out with the local schools, become active in an organization that visits the sick, as well as many other local charitable institutions. More than that, we watched as they became a huge support for so many people around us. After a few years they moved into our building. We saw firsthand how lonely people including many who had moved to New York from Jonas's hometown in Los Angeles, found a home at the Rechnitz's. A family we know with two hard of hearing young adults were befriended and helped. Jona made calls all over the world to help a friend of ours who has ALS find and get into a badly needed medical trial. He became a peacemaker in a family whose two brothers, heads of households, had been feuding for years. Rachel and Jona took in a boy from a broken home, supported him through college, helped him get a job and pull his life together. They also regularly hosted many guests who needed a homemade meal for the Sabbath. Some friends and I started a fund a few years ago to help poor people in the neighborhood pay for the holidays. Jona not only gave generously but got other people to give as well.

On a personal note, when our married kids moved into our home because their baby was extremely ill, Jona and Rachel befriended them, offered a listening ear, and supported them throughout the illness and were there for them when the baby eventually passed away, which is something even their longtime friends were not emotionally able to do during that very trying time.

When my father in law passed away seven years ago, a few days before the Jewish holiday of Rosh Hashanah, Jona arranged for meals to be sent to our home for our entire family because we were all in a week of mourning and didn't have the physical or emotional wherewithal to cook or arrange the holiday meals for ourselves.

It is impossible to describe how thoughtful Jona is unless you see it for yourself. Jona and his wife Rachel are extremely generous people. They don't ask what they can do to help someone in need but they see a situation, figure out how they can help and then make it happen. Sometimes what the other person needs is money, or a job or help with some problem in the family or a listening ear. Jona intuitively knows what is needed and he does it.

Jonas's an incredibly devoted husband, father, son, grandson, brother and friend. We have watched him in action be a real hands on father to his kids, taking them to the park and on other outings and generally nurture them with his devotion. We've gotten to know his entire family as he hosts his parents, In laws, grandparents and grandparents in law many times in their home. They hosted their elderly grandparents for extended periods of time. When Jonas's brother was in school nearby, of course he had a home at his brother and sister in law. He manages to juggle his time with his family, friends and community all the while making everyone around him feel good in his presence.

Rachel and Jona are people that you want to be around. They are sweet, thoughtful and nurturing in a very special way that is unusual for any couple, especially such a young one. I can't describe to you the void that was left in our lives and the lives of our children when they moved to LA.

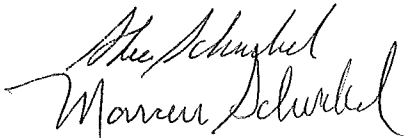
These are just a few examples of how many people are supported in large and small ways by Jona. He knows that he made a huge mistake. Not that it excuses his actions but knowing him as I do, it was not for any benefit of his own and it came from a misguided desire to help. He knows it was wrong and I am sure would never do anything like that again.

This entire experience has been understandably life altering for Jona and Rachel , having to face the embarrassment of being judged in the most public of ways and having so many of their neighbors turn against them. Even in our own synagogue, Jona was forbidden from being called up to the Torah and was asked to step down from organizations he had helped build and support. He went from being the most sought after guest to being literally shunned and even yelled at by acquaintances. I have no doubt this is a big part of why they moved to LA.

They have a strong fan base of people who will stick with them no matter what and we have tried to be the kind of friend Jonas always been. When all the details of this episode became public my wife Mariam remarked “Jona needs a friend like Jona” because he would be the kind of person that would think about what to do to help a friend in need, figure out how to do it and get it done. It’s been heart wrenching for us to watch them suffer

I just hope you can find it in your heart to judge him favorably.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Shea & Mariam Schwebel". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Shea & Mariam Schwebel

Exhibit 27

RABBI STEVEN WEIL

Senior Managing Director

Rabbi Steven Weil

Teaneck, NJ

September 25, 2019

Honorable Alvin K. Hellerstein
United States District Court
Southern District of New York
500 Pearl Street
New York, NY 10007

Dear Judge Hellerstein:

I have known Jona Rechnitz since his adolescence. Jona as a young man spent a significant part of his after-school time volunteering in the LA community. Jona had a unique relationship with a number of Holocaust survivors who had settled in Los Angeles. Unlike the typical adolescent who was interested in sports, peers and pop culture; Jona had the ability to transcend the generation gap and connect with people of all generations. Jona was a leader amongst his peers and used his leadership abilities to motivate his class and peers at YULA (Yeshiva University of Los Angeles HS) to channel their time and talents to give back to the community, their school and to less fortunate individuals in greater Los Angeles.

After Jona returned from studying in Israel in a gap year institute (Yeshivat Mevaseret Tziyon), we spent significant time together creating programming in Los Angeles for collegiate and graduate students. Jona as a young man wanted to build and give back to his community. He was thoughtful, insightful and a real team player to work with. There was no ulterior motive other than to create a culture where young Angelinos could find fulfillment in a community near their parents and grandparents without having to settle in communities that were a five-hour place ride from their family.

Jona married Rachel Kahn, an outstanding young woman from New York. The two of them were pillars in starting a community on the Yeshiva University side of Washington Heights that exploded and became an anchor for thoughtful young Jews. My own children have been the beneficiaries of this community.

Over the span of the last decade, since I moved to New York, Jona and I have met numerous times to discuss and work on a number of issues. We have dealt with programs that attract, inspire and educate unaffiliated adolescents to having a meaningful relationship with their religion and with the State of Israel. We have discussed and worked on finding employment for a number of individuals who were in economic dire straits. We have discussed and worked on creating a community (The West Side Synagogue) in Los Angeles that will enable young Jewish couples to mature as parents, communal members and as participants in the educational institutions of the Los Angeles Jewish community. Jona has played a special role in all the above. Anytime that Jona has financially supported these projects, he has asked for anonymity. This is something that he was taught by his parents and grandparents.

Over the last few years, Jona, Rachel and have suffered emotionally in a disproportionate manner. I have seen the constant barrage of articles that cause people to gossip. People can be cruel. People say hurtful things that impact a wife and mother. The family has gone through a long period of pain, hurt and humiliation that no one should have to suffer. I am a friend of both Jona and Rachel's parents and siblings. All of the above together with Jona and Rachel have spent many sleepless, tear drenched nights.

I am not writing this letter to deny any improprieties that have happened in the past. However, I am writing this letter to paint a picture of a person that is not the individual the press and others have portrayed. Over the past 20 months I have had numerous conversations with Jona regarding his activities. Based on our talks, it is clear to me that he understands the gravity of his activities. He is a humbled man; embarrassed and distraught for the pain he has caused to others, and the impact it has had on various individuals and their families, as well as his own. Jona, Rachel and their family have suffered. They have aged (physically they have lost the youth in their complexions) over the last few years. Jona is a different person than the man I knew 3 years ago.

Dear Judge Hellerstein, please take into account the totality of who and what Jona Rechnitz has been to his family, his people, to friend and to absolute stranger when making a determination of his future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Steven Weil", written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rabbi Steven Weil